



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Roswell Field Office
2909 West Second Street
Roswell, New Mexico 88201

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
EA# NM-060-01-89

WELL NAME & NO.: Huggins Federal #4
BLM Serial #: NM-33266

Section 15, T. 5 S., R. 24 E., NMPM,
1,400' FNL & 660' FEL, Unit Letter H

Chaves County, New Mexico

OPERATOR: Yates Petroleum Corporation

ACTION: Sundry Notices And Reports On Wells (On-lease buried pipeline)

SURFACE/MINERAL ESTATE: Federal Minerals/Surface

I. Introduction

A. Need for the Proposed Action:

In combination with the APD, the operator has utilized to the extent possible the Sundry Notice, for processing the on-lease buried pipeline.

Yates Petroleum Corporation submitted a Sundry Notices And Report On Wells application for an on-lease buried pipeline on 2/20/01. Yates Petroleum Corporation proposes to construct, operate, and maintain, a buried 2 inch natural gas steel pipeline. The pipeline is approximately 1,500 feet (0.28 mile) in length and will follow the existing new access road route. The pipeline will be buried on the south side of the road. Related appurtenance would consists of meter station, gas separator, valves, and cathodic protection. The buried pipeline and related appurtenances will be removed when the pipeline no longer services the Huggins Federal #4.

The proposed action would connect the Huggins Federal #4 gas well pipeline to an existing meter house on the Huggins Federal #1 well location. The tie-in point of the pipeline will be in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 15, T. 5 S., R. 24 E..

B. Conformance with Land Use Plan:

Oil and gas leasing and development is addressed in the Roswell Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement, January 1997, and is in conformance with the Roswell Approved Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision, October 1997.

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or other Plans:

The proposed action does not conflict with any known State or local planning, ordinance or zoning.

II. Proposed Action and Alternatives

A. Proposed Action:

1. **Sundry Notices and Reports on Wells;** was utilized for the on-lease buried pipeline proposal and for the related appurtenance. The buried pipeline would include; a corridor or route, with a maximum disturbance limit of 20 feet, a trencher would be used to dig a trench approximately 36 inches deep for the purpose of burying the pipeline. The pipeline will be buried 48 inches deep under all road crossings in order for the pipeline to be covered with a layer of soil 45 inches in depth.

B. Alternatives:

1. Relocate the Proposed Action:

A.) Change the Alignment--Reroute the Project (Buried Pipeline)

The proposed buried pipeline will parallel the new APD access road route. The pipeline would be confined within the parameters of the new road until it reaches the tie-in point. Thereby reducing soil disturbances by minimizing width requirements and maximizing multiple occupancy as directed in the RFO-RMP. The on-lease pipeline route is consistent with the policy of utilizing an approved corridor(s) that would be acceptable for pipeline construction, such as; new and/or existing road routes, two-track roads, and other previously disturbed pipeline routes, etc.. There are no alternate routes which would have substantially less impacts than or any clear advantages over the proposed action. Therefore the alternative of changing the route of the project is not analyzed any further.

2. No Action:

A. Under this alternative the proposal submitted under the Sundry Notice to construct an on-lease buried pipeline would be rejected.

III. Description of the Affected Environment

A. General Setting:

The proposed buried pipeline is located on federal minerals/surface, about 33 miles NE, of Roswell, N.M.. The mean annual precipitation is 13 to 14 inches. Historical and present use of the subject lands have been limited to livestock grazing and energy development.

B. Rights of Record:

An inspection of the Master Title Plats and other Bureau records revealed the following title information pertaining to valid existing prior rights on the subject lands:

- Oil and gas leases: **NM-33266** - covers lease actions.
- No federally administered rights-of-way would be affected in the project area.
- No mining claims are recorded within Sec. 15, T. 5 S., R. 24 E., NMPM.

C. Affected Resources:

The following critical resources have been evaluated and are either not present or are not affected by the proposed action or the alternatives in this EA:

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC's)
Cultural Resources (01-R-008-A)
Farmlands, Prime/Unique
Floodplains
Native American Religious Concerns
Threatened or Endangered Species (Plants & Animals)
Wastes, Hazardous/Solid
Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Wild & Scenic Rivers
Wilderness

1. Air Quality:

The area of the proposed action is considered a Class II air quality area. A Class II area allows a moderate amount air quality degradation. The primary sources of air pollution are dust from blowing wind on disturbed or exposed soils and exhaust emissions from motorized equipment.

2. Soils:

These soils group is described in the Soil Survey of Chaves County, New Mexico - Northern Part (Pages 60 & 61 and map #12). The proposed action would occur in areas of shallow, well drained soils on uplands in the western part of the survey area. The Reeves soil is deep and well drained. It formed in alluvium derived dominantly from calcareous material high in content of gypsum. Permeability of the Reeves soil is moderate. Available water capacity is moderate. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate. The hazard of soil blowing is high. 0 to 3 percent slopes.

The Milner and Hollomex soils are deep and well drained. The soils formed in calcareous

alluvium and residuum. Permeability of the Milner and Hollomex soil is moderate. Available water capacity is very low. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate. The hazard of soil blowing is high.

3. Vegetation:

The native vegetation in the area is composed of mainly grasses, shrubs, and forbs, such as, blue grama, tobosa, black grama, and sand dropseed. There are no known populations of noxious or invasive weed species at the proposed site.

4. Ground Water Quality:

Fresh water sources for livestock and domestic use are found in alluvium and in the San Andres formation. Fresh water has been reported at 60' in section 33, T. 5 S., R. 25 E., and was flowing 150 barrels per hour at a depth of 660'. A nearby report cites possible saline water flows at around 1,000', as a maximum depth to usable water should be around 850'.

5. Wildlife:

Wildlife species utilizing this area for habitat include mule deer, pronghorn antelope, coyote, fox, rabbits, kangaroo rats, pocket gophers, herptile species, as well as a variety of songbirds, dove, quail, and raptors.

No known special status species (plant/animal) or critical habitat are present within the confines of the project area.

6. Range: The well is located on a BLM grazing allotment, #4041, operated by; John Burson, P.O. Box 2015, Roswell, N.M. 88202.

7. VRM/Recreation: The proposed action is located in a designated VRM Class IV area. Recreation in the vicinity includes seasonal hunting.

8. Cave/Karst: No surface cave/karst features were observed in the immediate vicinity of the proposed actions.

9. Minority or Low-income Populations or Communities: The proposed project would not affect the minority or low-income populations or communities.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

A. Proposed Action Impacts:

The surface disturbance involved in the construction of the buried pipeline will utilize 0.7 acre of federal surface.

1. Air Quality:

Air quality would temporary be impacted with pollution from exhaust omissions, chemical odors, and dust that would be caused by the motorized equipment used to construct the pipeline. Dust dissemination would discontinue upon completion of the construction phase of the pipeline. The completion of the construction phase of the operations would drastically reduce the air pollution from the trenching equipment. The winds that frequent the southeastern part of New Mexico generally help in dispersing the odors and omissions. The impacts to the air quality would be greatly reduced as the operational phases of doing business in the gas field are completed.

2. Soils:

The construction of the buried pipeline would physically disturb about 0.7 acre of surface ground soil. Construction of the pipeline would affect deeper soil horizons because of the proposed 36 inch depth of the trench. The exposed soils would be susceptible to wind blowing and water erosion. The impact would be remedied when the disturbed areas are revegetated.

3. Vegetation:

Construction activities on the pipeline corridor would remove about 0.7 acre of native vegetation from the pipeline route. The impact on the vegetation would be remedied when the seeding process is completed on the pipeline route. Over time native vegetation would also reestablish on the pipeline route and would lessen the impact to the vegetation.

The construction of the buried pipeline may unintentionally contribute to the establishment and spread of noxious weeds. Noxious weed seeds could be carried onto the project areas by construction equipment and transport vehicles. The main mechanism for seed dispersion on pipeline route is by equipment and vehicles that were previously used and/or driven over noxious weed infested areas. The potential for the dissemination of invasive and noxious weed seeds may be elevated by the use of construction equipment typically contracted out to companies that may be from other geographic areas in the region. Washing and decontaminating the equipment prior to transporting the equipment on site would minimize this impact.

4. Ground Water Quality:

The use of steel pipe would reduce or eliminate leakage of pollutants into the soil and eventually reaching groundwater. Potential pipeline leaks could result in contamination of the soils on the pipeline route and may potentially impact groundwater resources in the long term. Proper pipeline construction would reduce or eliminate the potential for groundwater contamination from subsurface sources.

5. Wildlife:

Some small wildlife species may be killed and their dens or nests destroyed during construction of the pipeline. The construction of the pipeline could cause fragmentation of wildlife habitat. The short term negative impact to wildlife would occur during the construction phase of the

operation, due to noise and habitat destruction. In general, most wildlife species would become habituated once the pipeline has been constructed and construction activities cease to exist. Upon completion of the pipeline project, the area would revegetate and wildlife would return to previous levels.

6. Range: There would be some minor disruption of livestock grazing in the pasture, specifically on the pipeline route, during the construction of the pipeline.

7. VRM/Recreation:

The construction of the pipeline would slightly modify the existing visual features of the landscape due to the scarification of the terrain by the pipeline route. Until reclamation of the disturbed areas are accomplished, the pipeline route may dominate the view of the landscape for a short while.

8. Cave/karst: There would be no impact to known cave entrances, or karst features within the project area.

B. Alternatives:

1. Relocation Alternative:

The alternative of changing the pipeline route involved in this action was not analyzed further because no other alternative route would have significantly fewer impacts than, or have a clear advantage over, the proposed pipeline route.

2. No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative would constitute denial of the Sundry Notices And Reports On Wells application. This alternative would result in none of the identified environmental impacts. There would, however, be an adverse economic impact to the applicant through the denial of the lessee's right to develop the mineral reserves or through increased costs of accessing those mineral reserves through other means. There have been no significant or unmitigatable impacts identified as a result of this analysis which would warrant selection of the no action alternative.

C. Mitigation:

The Roswell Field Office; The Buried Pipeline Stipulations For The Roswell Field Office, BLM, would be applied to the pipeline construction phase of the operations, and the special requirements derived from this EA, would be applied to this proposed action to minimize the surface disturbance and conserve the surrounding landscape.

D. Cumulative Impacts:

While it is likely that there will be no significant cumulative impact from the proposed action, continued oil and gas development, and other surface-disturbing activities in this area, may

potentially have negative cumulative impacts on vegetation, soil, water, livestock, and wildlife.

V. Consultation and Coordination

An onsite inspection was conducted on the access road and well pad 9/15/00. In attendance was **Cy Cowan, Regulatory Agent for Yates Petroleum Corporation** and Richard Hill, Environmental Protection Specialist from BLM. Coordination and consultation has occurred with the applicant's agent. The comments and suggestions expressed during the onsite consultation have been incorporated into this EA.

Coordination and consultation has occurred with Roswell Field Office staff specialist. The comments and suggestions expressed during the review of the proposed action and environmental assessment have been incorporated into this EA.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND DECISION RECORD
EA-NM-060-01-086**

DECISION: It is my decision to authorize the Sundry Notices And Reports On Wells, for the Huggins Federal #4 gas well, submitted by Yates Petroleum Corporation. The provisions for the approval of the Sundry Notice will include the attachment of the Roswell Field Office requirements as defined in the following exhibit; **Exhibit E - The Buried Pipeline Stipulations For The Roswell Field Office, BLM, and special mitigating measures developed in the environmental assessment.**

I recommend that reclamation requirements be attached to the pipeline project upon well abandonment, including additional requirements imperative for the complete reclamation of the disturbed areas. These actions are subject to 43 CFR 3160 regulations for Onshore Oil and Gas operations on federal lease NM-33266.

Authority for these actions is the Mineral Leasing Act of February 25, 1920, as amended.

These actions will affect public lands described as:


New Mexico Principal Meridian

Section 15; SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, T. 5 S., R. 24 E.
1,400' FNL & 660' FEL

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, I have determined that impacts resulting from the proposed actions are not expected to be significant and an environmental impact statement is not required.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION: The proposed actions would not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. Portions of the subject lands and adjacent lands have been used for similar purposes and all present and potential uses and users have been considered.

COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING: The construction phase of the proposed actions and subsequent operational phases will be monitored as per regulations.



Larry D. Bray, Assistant Field Manager,
Lands and Minerals

04/16/2001
Date